

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10
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AMEMBASSY BONN
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
USAREUR HEIDELBERG
USAFE RAMSTEIN
USCINCEUR STUTTGART

UNCLAS DUSSELDORF 0710

MIL ADEES FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GW
SUBJECT: MINISTER PRESIDENT KUEHN SURVIVES THE IDES OF APRIL

REF: DUESSELDORF 648

1. HEINZ KUEHN (SPD) MINISTER PRESIDENT OF NORTH RHINE-
WESTPHALIA (NRW) HAS ESCAPED A PLOT TO ENFORCE HIS
RESIGNATION FROM OFFICE AS OF MAY 17, 1978. HE WAS TO
BE REPLACED BY JOHANNES RAU, NRW MINISTER OF SCIENCE
AND RESEARCH AND NRW/SPD CHAIRMAN, WHO HAS, HOWEVER,
DISSOCIATED HIMSELF FROM SUCH MACHINATIONS. THE PRE-
PETRATORS OF THE INTRIGUE WERE VAGUELY IDENTIFIED AS
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"SOME WILD YOUNG MEN" IN THE SPD AND SOME OF THE LEADERS
OF THE FOUR NRW/SPD DISTRICT ORGANIZATIONS.

2. ACCORDING TO NRW/FDP SOURCES THE SPONSORS OF THE PLOT
HAD HOPED TO ENLIST THE AID OF THE FDP IN OUSTING KUEHN
FROM HIS OFFICE. THE NRW/FDP EMPHATICALLY REFUSED TO
LEND ITS SUPPORT TO THE SCHEME. AT ITS CONVENTION ON

APRIL 22-23, 1978 THE PLAN TO OUST KUEHN WAS NOT MENTIONED PUBLICLY BUT LEADING FDP PERSONALITIES SUCH AS FEDERAL FDP CHAIRMAN AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HANS DIETRICH GENSCHER, NRW/FDP CHAIRMAN AND NRW MINISTER OF ECONOMICS AND TRANSPORT, DR. HORST LUDWIG RIEMER AND NRW/FDP VICE CHAIRMAN AND FEDERAL MINISTER OF ECONOMICS DR. OTTO GRAF LAMBSDORFF OSTENTATIOUSLY PRAISED KUEHN AS A FAIR AND LIBERAL PARTNER. RIEMER NOTED THAT THE FDP HAS NEVER ASKED FOR KUEHN'S RESIGNATION PRIOR TO THE EXPIRATION TO HIS TERM OF OFFICE BUT WILL LEAVE A DECISION TO THE SPD (SEE REF.)

3. THE REVELATION OF THE PLOT WAS PRECEDED BY STATEMENTS OF HERBERT WEHNER, SPD BUNDESTAG FACTION LEADER AND EGON FRANKE (SPD) MINISTER OF INTERNAL GERMAN RELATIONS, URGING KUEHN TO REMAIN IN OFFICE UNTIL THE END OF HIS TERM IN 1980. THEIR APPEAL WAS OBVIOUSLY MOTIVATED BY THE FEAR THAT KUEHN'S SUCCESSOR MAY NOT ACCUMULATE THE NECESSARY MAJORITY IN THE LANDTAG.

4. JUST THREE DAYS PRIOR TO THE EXPOSURE OF THE PLOT IN THE PRESS, DR. CHRISTOPH ZOEPEL, NRW/SPD VICE CHAIRMAN AND RECENTLY APPOINTED NRW MINISTER OF FEDERAL AFFAIRS TOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE IN AN OFF-HAND WAY THAT KUEHN WILL RESIGN IN OCTOBER OR AT THE LATEST NOVEMBER 1978. KUEHN, WHO HAS NEVER BEEN SPECIFIC ON THE SUBJECT, ALLOWED THAT THERE IS SOME SUBSTANCE TO ZOEPEL'S STATEMENT BUT UNCLASSIFIED

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DEPLORED ITS STYLE AND TIMING AND WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO MAKE A PERTINENT STATEMENT HIMSELF.

5. ZOEPEL WAS SEVERELY REPRIMANDED BY CHANCELLOR HELMUT SCHMIDT AND THE LEADERSHIP OF THE SPD/LANDTAG FACTION FOR HIS RASH AND UNTIMELY ANNOUNCEMENT WHICH IS NOT ONLY CONSIDERED TO BE DETRIMENTAL TO KUEHN'S STATUS AS MINISTER PRESIDENT BUT ALSO TO THE SPD AS A WHOLE. IT WAS EVEN SUSPECTED THAT ZOEPEL WAS AMONG THE PLOTTERS SINCE HE IS COVETING THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND RESEARCH IN CASE OF RAU'S ELECTION AS MINISTER PRESIDENT.

6. COMMENTS: THE INTRIGUE MUST HAVE BEEN STARTED DURING THE ABSENCE OF NRW/SPD LANDTAG FACTION LEADER DR. DIETER HAAK, ON A LEADER GRANT IN THE U.S. MARCH/APRIL 1978. HAAK MADE A FUTILE ATTEMPT TO KEEP A LID ON THE AFFAIR AND, ABOVE ALL, KEEP IT OUT OF THE PRESS. NOW THE SPD MUST FEAR DISSENTING VOTES FROM ITS OWN RANKS IN THE EVENTUAL SECRET VOTE FOR KUEHN'S SUCCESSOR IN THE LANDTAG. THE FDP LANDTAG FACTION CHAIRMAN HAS, ON THE OTHER HAND, GIVEN PUBLIC ASSURANCES THAT THERE WILL BE NO DISSENTERS AMONG THE 14 FDP DEPUTIES, IF EITHER RAU OR NRW FINANCE

MINISTER DR. DIETHER POSSER ARE NOMINATED TO SUCCEED KUEHN
AS MINISTER PRESIDENT.DUX

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